2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

846 757 she is made to smell samôn-net, a plant (the *Nigella sativa*), which is put in an earthen pot, strongly heated, and then triturated into the shape of a ball. The odour is not exactly such as one would recognise as calculated to exhilarate any one, but probably after the hot bricks and the se sein everything else comes as a matter of detail. All this is done to drive out the noxious humours which are supposed to be generated by the birth of a child. On the seventh day the woman takes an elementary kind of Turkish bath. She sits over a large jar of boiling water, medicated with tamarind twigs and a few other kinds of leaves and grasses, with a blanket over her. After about an hour of this she has a cold bath, and is then free to do as she pleases. She usually goes to bed.

165 846 177·84 184 It might be supposed that under this treatment death in child-bearing would be very frequent, but as far as imperfect statistics can show the percentage is not much higher than in other countries. The result, however, appears in another way. A woman ages up ten or fifteen years for every child she has. It is satisfactory to notice that in all the larger towns in Lower Burma the more unpleasant features are fading away before the example and influence of women of other nationalities. In the jungle and in Upper Burma, however, ancient use and wont still prevail, and the young mother of fourteen or fifteen is shrivelled into thirty with her first baby.

845 If a woman gives birth to a still-born child, a piece of iron is placed in the cloth in which the body is wrapped, or in the coffin if there is one, and at the burial some member of the family says some such formula as "Never more return into thy mother's womb till this metal becomes soft as down."

[775] If a married woman dies before bearing a child (alôn hnin the-thi), a Cæsarean operation is performed, and the alôn is buried in some secret place. The reason alleged for this is, that were it not done, the husband in future existences would marry this woman again, and she would die in the same way. Were the embryo not secretly buried it would be disinterred by hmaw-sayās, necromancers, and wizards, who would make evil uses of it. Children's cauls are as highly thought of by Burmans as they are by English

845 ● 754

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

845
754 ●
553
791
852
431

sailors; only where the tar thinks he will be saved from drowning, the Turanian expects to gain the patronage of any great person he may address.

The infant having survived and the mother recovered from her roasting, the next thing to be done is to name the child. This usually happens about a fortnight after the birth. A fortunate day and hour is sought out by some Brahmin astrologer, or a sayā of lesser note, if there is no such dignitary in the neighbourhood. A great feast, as elaborate as the wealth or the ambition and borrowing capacities of the parents admit, is prepared, and all the friends of the family and the neighbours are invited to come. The child's head is usually washed for the first time on this day. The ceremony is therefore called kin-bôn tat thi. A decoction of the pods and bark of the soap acacia (*Acacia rugata*) or kin-bôn is prepared, and with this the midwife washes the infant's head and the guests wash their hands. Most of them bring friendly contributions towards the feast, or perhaps a little money. The mother sits down in the centre of the circle with the infant in her arms, and near her is the father. The company sit gravely smoking and chewing betel for a time, and then some elder, or a near relation of the parents, seems struck with a name, and suggests it aloud. Everybody accepts it on the spot, and falls to discussing the aptness of the name and the accomplishments and virtues of people they have known with that appellation. This is, however, all a pre-arranged thing. The father and mother have settled beforehand what the child is to be called, and have apprised the lu-gyi selected what is to be the result of his cogitations. The midwife then gets a present according to the means of the family, having previously, after the seven days' roasting, received the regulation fee of one pyi, the sixteenth of a basket of husked rice, one mat, and a four anna bit. Then everybody adjourns to the feast, which, with the dessert of le'-pet, salted ginger cut into small strips, ground nuts, fried garlic, the invariable betel apparatus, cheroots, and what not, pass the time till nightfall, when, except in the case of poor people, there is always a pwè which carries on proceedings till the next morning.

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

making mud pies according to cosmopolitan infantile habit, and not seldom getting up decorous and serious representations of the choral dances and dramatic performances they have seen. The spectacle of a little girl vigorously puffing a big green cheroot while she moulds a heap of mud into shapely form is only a little more startling to the white-faced foreigner than the declamatory passion of a five-year-old princeling. So it goes on till the eighth year is reached; then it is time to go to the monastic school.

On the following page is a copy of the sadā of Shin Thuza. The young lady, I regret to say, is dead. The publication of her horoscope cannot therefore enable malicious persons to work her any harm by means of spells. The side represented is the obverse. I have submitted the figures to two very distinguished wranglers, but they have been unable to detect any system in them.

On the reverse, surrounded by an ornamental border of numbers written in accordance with a rhyme, are recorded in mystic language the details. The young lady was born in the year 1220 B.E. (twenty-three years ago), in the astrological cycle 422, in the month of Ta-bodwè, on the ninth of the waxing moon, and the seventh day (Friday) of the week, in the evening, at thôn chetti gyaw, a little past the third hour, or more exactly, three nayi, two pads, and ten bizana. Then the precise position of the constellation in the heavens is noted. It is thirteen bǎwa (feet), five finger breadths, three mayaw (grains' length), one sessamum seed (nan), and eight hairs' breadths from the planet. Then it winds up to the effect that this is the horoscope of the maiden, whom, that she may be known by a pleasant name, her parents have called Shin Thuza. "May she live to be a hundred and twenty!" Alas! she did not.

At either side of these details are two identical magic squares, formed in accordance with the well-known Hindoo Law. Over one is written "The Buddha"; over the other "The Law"; beneath the former "Rangoon," and the latter "650." The two palm-leaves are tightly sewn together, and the writings and figures, done with a metal style on the dry leaf, are very neatly executed.

2	9	4
7	5	3
6	1	8

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

might be bribed. The usual result is to break the robber's spirit. Once the continuity is interrupted the consecration is gone. More peaceable people wear necklaces or bracelets of such talismans in the belief that they are thus proof against malignant witches and necromancers. Most Englishmen in Burma, who are on friendly terms with the people, have been asked to test the virtue of such a charm, by firing at it tied up in a handkerchief. If the incantation is valid the handkerchief will be unharmed, though the muzzle of the pistol be held up to it. In such a case the pistol will burst.

Another kind of tattooing is the mwe se, which guards against danger from snake bite. Similarly the a-kwè a-ka, the shielding, or defending drug, renders harmless the spells of wizards and geomancers, and keeps far away evil spirits of every kind. But the most hideous and weird of the superstitions about tattooing is that connected with the a-kyan se. There are but very few sayās who are acquainted with the necessary drugs and incantations, and fewer people still who have the courage to submit to the operation, for many men are pointed out whose minds have given way under the gruesome process, and who wander about graveyards, gnashing their teeth and fumbling about for human bones to gnaw and mouth. And no wonder, for some tattooers make them chew the raw flesh of a man who has been hanged, while the figure is being tattooed on the breast. Those who go through the operation are called Baw-di-tha-da. Some become Baw-di-tha-da without knowing it, and without the sickening necessity of mumbling human flesh like a ghoul. I knew an instance in a monastery. The patient was a boarder about fourteen years of age. A Shan tattooer wandering about the country spent a couple of nights in the kyaung, and the boy, attracted by the fellow's eerie tales, managed to save up a good many titbits for him from the food going in the monastery. Out of gratitude, and having nothing better to give him, for he was very poor and homeless, the sayā tattooed on the lad a figure with singular drugs, muttering queer phrases the while. Then he went away saying no more than that it would make the boy very strong. In about a month's time the boarder displayed unmistakable signs of being a Baw-di-tha-da. He

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

304
754

leapt enormous heights in the air, jumped about and ran at random, carried with the utmost ease things which no one else could move. The abbot locked him up in a sadaik, the box in which the palm-leaf manuscripts were kept; he got out without injuring the lock in any way, sprang on to the roof of the monastery, forty feet high, and turned a somersault to the ground without hurting himself in the least. He had been a boy of very soft, easy temper, and now he became fiery and uncertain, and with his vast strength, very dangerous. He only calmed down when a monk preached the law to him. He was constantly doing marvellous things; one day he walked across the river in front of the monastery, holding a monk's ôk, or food vessel, in his hands. The depth of the water was over six fathoms, but it did not reach higher than his waist. On another occasion a tree which was being cut down fell on him. He sank into the ground and came forth quite uninjured. After some years his parents took him to Magwe in Upper Burma. There he fell into bad courses and became a dacoit. This was terrible for his family in a special way, because in native territory if they cannot catch the dacoit they seize all his friends and relations and put them in jail till they can get hold of the real culprit, and no one can lay hands on a Baw-di-tha-da. At last, however, he was restored to his right mind. A holy ascetic came across him, soothed him with the payeit gyi, and then with a rusty nail and sacred medicines, tattooed out the figure put on with such lamentable results by the Shan sayā. The quondam Baw-di-tha-da is now a staid and respected broker in the employ of one of the best-known English rice firms in Rangoon. He was fortunate; most Baw-di-tha-das have to be killed in their sleep.

[681]

[792]

304
751

But though Baw-di-tha-das are very rare, charmed tattooing is not, and there are some fast young men who seem almost to make picture galleries of themselves with emblems and patterns all over their chests, arms, backs, and the ·lves of their legs. The colour gradually dies away until : last nothing remains but the blue breeches. These really lc k well, and they last a man to his dying day.

The following recipes and formulæ to be repeated

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma(Mon) AP1
Burmese AP4

Be
Ba
776
782
755
714

sick will recover and the plague leave the locality. Thereupon the villagers rush off like madmen into the surrounding forest, and run about hither and thither in a reckless way with an open cloth, or the end of their waistcloth, in their hands. Some of them suddenly make a plunge with their cloth over a bush or a tussock of grass, and then closing it up carefully, hurry breathless back to the village. The leip-bya or "butterflies" of the sick man are supposed to have been captured. The paso, or cloth, is carefully opened and shaken over the patient's head, and the leip-bya is supposed to return to its proper habitation. This operation is repeated several times, in case a wrong "butterfly" might have been captured, or lest the actual one should have escaped on the way. Then everybody returns. The function is not without its danger, for it has happened that the
● [754] temporary mimes have become permanently possessed of evil spirits, and as witches and wizards have proved as great curses to the neighbourhood as any pestilence could have been. Which things are an allegory. The whole ceremony
[178] is beginning to get into very bad odour in the more settled parts of the province, and respectable people avoid having anything to do with it, while those who have taken a part are ashamed to own it.

776
782

All these nats are directly connected with a particular locality, and therefore well known to, and regularly propitiated by, the inhabitants of that place. But there are abundance of nats to be found elsewhere, away from villages and houses, and all of them equally ready to resent any injury which the passer-by may unwittingly do them. When a Burman starts on a journey he hangs a bunch of plantains, or a twig of the tha-bye tree, on the pole of the buffalo cart or the stern of the boat, to conciliate any spirit whose beat he may intrude upon. The fisherman makes offerings in his nat-sin every time he launches his dug-out; the lonely hunter in the forest deposits some rice and ties together a few leaves whenever he comes across some particularly large and imposing tree, lest there might be a thi'pin-saung nat dwelling there. Should there be none, the tied-back twigs will at any rate stand in evidence to the taw-saung nat, the demon who presides over all the forest.

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

are recorded with enthusiasm and delighted precision of detail; and when an hour or so has been passed in this way, a little more rice-husking is done, and the girls set to work getting ready the onions and sesamum seed, and slicing up the cocoa-nut kernels. This sort of thing goes on all the night through. There is half an hour's work, and then an hour of singing and story-telling and gossip; about the great Shinbinthalyaung, the gigantic recumbent image of Shin Gautama dug up lately near Pegu; of the two min-laungs, the embryo kings, who have been revealed there, and the third one, who is foretold by the old theit-sa, the prophecy which declares that he will restore the ancient Talaing kings and revive religion; of the new hti which is being set up on the pagoda of the lotus tank, and its exceeding splendour, each single one of the concentric rings having been assigned as a particular favour to one out of many competing districts. Then there is a discussion as to the new fashion of turbans, the one plain colour with worked flowers on it, which has supplemented the old thinner style with more braid-like patterns; and the present rage for waist-cloths with many-coloured stripes in place of the old wavy and dog's-tooth fashion. Then the girls are rallied about the method in which they dress their hair—all of them in the style just declared treasonable in the upper country. Queen Supayalat has hit upon some particular set, or plaiting of her tresses, which she thinks becomes her very well, and a royal order has come out making it penal for any meaner damsels to adopt the same method. Consequently all the maidens from Taungoo to Kyauk-Hpyu and the A-eng Pass to Malawun have made up after the queenly model and flatter themselves that it is *chic*. There are always ghost stories at these gatherings, tales about the three farmer brothers that were killed just after harvest time three years ago, and now haunt the dense patch of swampy jungle down by the creek at nat seins, and sometimes scare the fishermen out of a night's work by the violent agitation of the tree-tops on a still night; and then there is that old hag in the lone house at the far end of the village, who is certainly a witch; it must have been she who gave the old sikkè the tet, poor old man, and he a payā-tagā too, founder

533
832
527
521
[291]
[775]
[754]

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

527 of the pagoda on the slope of the "Brother and Sister Hill";
521 and there is little Ma Mi; the old beldam looked at her over
●[754] the fence on the fifth of last waning, and the poor thing lost her sweetheart before the change of the moon, and had all her fine false hair stolen only three days ago: proof enough that of the *jettatura*.

527 It is long past midnight, when all the cocks of the village crow together, deriving their knowledge of the exact time from the diet of burnt astrological books, pecked at by their ancestors long ago, when the objection to cabalistic works was much more violent than it is nowadays; and sometimes daylight is coming in, and the sound of the morning chant steals over from the monastery, when the party breaks up and all go home. The kauk hnyin has been all husked, and, mixed up with the other ingredients, is simmering away over the fire. Every one has a virtuous consciousness of having gained considerable kutho in addition to having spent a very agreeable time. Few go to sleep. They have eaten too much le'hpet for that, and in an hour or two some of them will be wanted again to take the tamanè round. That is done about eight o'clock in the case of the monks. The farmer himself and his family carry it to the monastery in the spire-shaped lacquer-box, and having paid the usual reverence, deposit it before the superior, who looks on calmly without a word of thanks, or even the semblance of a recognition, but says before they go, that if they keep the Ten Precepts and live virtuously, they will escape the Four States of Punishment and be delivered from the Five Enemies. Then the "supporters" wheel on the right, and depart home to make up the portions for all their friends and neighbours. These are usually taken round by the girls, who go in bevies of three or four, dressed in their finest clothes and with flowers in their hair, and deliver the dainty with compliments, and injunctions to eat it immediately. By six o'clock in the evening, when the sonorous wooden bell of the monastery is summoning in all the scholars, the entire village is asleep; and they do not get up very early next morning. Nobody in the whole place has been drunk; and if there is an opium-eater in the village, he was not asked to the feast and had none of the tamanè.

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

CHAPTER XLIV

WIZARDS, DOCTORS, AND WISE MEN

WIZARDS and witches are very common in Burma. The thing runs in families, and on the Chindwin river in Upper Burma there is a village called Kale Thaungthut, "the small town at the top of the sandbank," where the entire population is credited with supernatural power of this kind. They have a king there, and if a person who has been bewitched goes to him and represents that he has been malignantly and unjustifiably laid under a spell by some unknown person, the wizard king goes through some inverted prayers and ceremonies, and utters an incantation, which forces the bewitcher to his presence. An explanation is then demanded, and if no just cause can be shown, the witch is punished and the afflicted person is freed from his ailment. Many bewitched people who have gone there to be cured have, however, never come back again, and pilgrimages thither are therefore not so common as they might be otherwise, and of course no one, not afflicted, would be reckless enough to go, as it were, into the lion's den.

But there are good witches and bad. There are the sôns, who delight in nothing so much as in killing people, afflicting them with epilepsy, fits, and divers other ailments; and there are the wézas, who are good people, and strive to overthrow the machinations of the sôns against the welfare of mankind, while themselves learned in all the knowledge of the mystic art. Wéza simply means wisdom or knowledge, and the sorcery studied by both classes is the same. Both kinds of wise men are divided into four orders, according

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 APl Burma,
Burmese AP4

791
754

The doings of the wizards therefore enter largely into Burmese domestic life. There is a sôn in the neighbourhood, and all the mischief which happens there is ascribed to him, while the aid of the in sayās and others is called in to frustrate his knavish tricks. The sôn is of course unknown, or the people would soon make short work of him. In remote country places, among other remnants of trial by ordeal, they still occasionally put a suspected person to the old test. A woman is suspected of being a sônma. Her hands and feet are tied, and she is placed between two boats moored out in the river. A quantity of filth is heaped upon her, and the boats are then drawn away so that she falls into the water. If she swims she is a witch, and is put to death. If, on the contrary, she sinks, it is a proof of her innocence, and the accusers are punished. To prevent her from being drowned, a rope made of green bark is tied round her waist, so that she may be pulled on shore again. The great danger from the witches is that, like the *wehrwolf*, they can assume the appearance of animals, or living people, even of one's own relations. If, however, the apparition is wounded, the same injury will be found on the person of the actual witch. Few people, however, have the courage to attack a nocturnal visitant whom they believe to be a sôn, and prefer propitiation in the shape of refections laid outside the house. In all these points the beliefs and fears coincide with those of other countries, and it is therefore unnecessary to do more than allude to them.

The rudiments of the science are contained in the volumes of the Bedin and a book on astrology and cabalistic science called the Deittôn. These are very imperfect, and individual magic-workers advance far beyond the matter to be found in them. It is said that these books were complete, but that in the time of the Lord Buddha the people, worked on by his vivid preaching, seized on all the magic volumes, together with all weapons and objects for destroying life, and heaping them together, set fire to them. But Dewadat, cousin of Shin Gautama, and always plotting harm against him, snatched several of the sections from the flames, and so a portion of the old science was preserved in the world. This tradition of course shows the attitude of the monks and the

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

791
754

religious towards the students of this sort of learning. Nevertheless, just as every Burman at some time in his life dabbles a little in alchemy, so the bedin sayās and hmaw sayās, and the magicians, good and evil, obtain believers and clients.

757

As the sôns are supposed to afflict people with strange illnesses, the province of the wézas becomes very much mixed up with that of the professional doctors. The latter cannot complain, and the general public can see no reason why the one should not be as good a physician as the other, for doctors in Burma take no diploma, and are not required to give proofs of skill in the healing art to any one but themselves. Many of them therefore are the most arrant charlatans, giving medicines according to fancy and in unlimited quantities. On the principle of like to like, prescriptions mainly composed of cayenne, cloves, ginger, and the like, are made up for fever patients, while purgatives are rigidly withheld. If a patient says he is no better five minutes after he has swallowed a dose, something else is tried, and so on, till the wretched victim has a stomach loaded with drugs to the limit of the prescriber's pharmacopœia. These quacks are too often taken as the only representatives of Burmese medical skill, and it is denied that any one in the country has a right to the title of doctor at all. But it is certain that some have really useful and efficacious remedies for ordinary ailments, such as jungle fever, dysentery, and other frequently-met-with diseases, while it is admitted that they are particularly successful in the treatment of sores and ulcers. I knew of a case in Rangoon where varicose ulcers, which had resisted the efforts of the best English doctors in Rangoon and Calcutta, yielded to the simples of a Burmese sethama. He used earth-oil with an infusion of some seed or bark, and speedily effected a cure. The Burmese *materia medica* consists of barks, leaves, flowers, seeds, roots, and a few simple minerals, of which they have an empirical knowledge. They especially deal in pills and powders, which they carry about with them in little phials of bamboo. These little cylinders are usually gilt and painted bright red, and are always strongly perfumed. It does not so much matter about the materials as at what time of the moon and under what constellations the ingredients are gathered. Whoever reaches a place within three days

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

754 ● A woman who has seven sons or seven daughters in unbroken succession is almost certain to become a witch; her husband had better not quarrel with her at any rate.

823 At Kāma, a small place between Prome and Thayetmyo, there is a spirit flame, a kind of Jack o' Lantern, in a hollow near the town. Long ago a smith was killed in a brawl and became a nat after death. He liked his old profession and set up a nat-fire, and worked away at nights on a spectral forge. The inhabitants soon found out what was going on, and after their first terror was over used to go out in the middle of the day and leave a piece of iron, saying, "Good Mr. Spirit, make me an axe, a dah, a hoe." Next day they found it all ready made. At last a Chin—just the [513] [186] sort of thing one of those stupid people would do—hid himself, and just when the midnight cocks had finished crowing, up rose the smith in human shape, dressed in a red paso and a flaring red turban. He began hammering away on his anvil, welding a sword. The infatuated Chin at last shouted, "Make it quick." The demon smith whipped round on the instant and flung the red-hot dah at him, burning his cheek. The indiscreet peeping Tom took to his heels and ran. After he had got a mile away he rubbed his blistered cheek, and in after-times there rose at that place Pāpôt, "the cheek-rubbing village." A mile farther on he began to shake all over with fatigue and terror, whence the name of Tôn, "the trembling village." Finally, when he reached the site of Paukpogu, the "swelling burst," he sank down on the ground, and was found there next morning with just enough life left to tell his story. The smith never worked again, but his fire may be seen to this day. Once a year all the house fires in Kāma are put out and lighted again from the nat-mi. Should any one neglect so to pay hônour to the nat, his house and all his goods will be burnt before the year is out. The resemblance to the legend of Wayland Smith at Lambourn in Berkshire is obvious. The [103] naming of the villages is also a favourite form of Horne Took etymology prevalent all over Burma.

823 The common notion of earthquakes is that the earth is supported on the shoulders of four creatures called nga-hlyin. These monsters are less sturdy than the classical Atlas, and

Basic Burmese Concepts of Health and Sickness.

753
181
759

The Burmese regard health as the best of all earthly blessings. Although Buddha referred to the living body as a decaying corpse, which it was folly to feed, he recognized the necessity for bodily health in order to carry out the all-important mental activities connected with the Buddhist religion. It is then essential for each person to be as physically and mentally sound as he is able. The forces governing health and sickness are both supernatural and natural each with its own set of medical specialists. The specialists are called for only when the case is far advanced there being an extensive lore of home precautions and curative practices. In general, disorders caused by nats and ghosts (supernatural) or magic are recognized by their sudden, catastrophic or otherwise unusual nature, and are both instigated and cured by magical means. The natural disorders are caused by weaknesses in the constitution of the patient, foreign bodies, dangerous foods and such-like means, and are cured through knowledge of medical principles. The germ concept of disease is completely lacking, although when foreign matter is seen, as mosquito larvae in water, it is frequently regarded as unhealthy. The western idea of omnipresent harmful bacteria is regarded as fantastic in being contrary to observation - "our ancestors have lived for countless generations in these surroundings which you regard as dangerous", they will say. There are some 80 different kinds of PO KYOSIBA or harmful ingredients that can infect the body. These range from undesirable ingredients in food to mystical influences that rise in the teeth to cause tooth-ache. The cleanliness of the Burmese, as seen in their several daily baths and emphasis on clean clothes, is not out of regard for "hygenic" reasons, but rather for social reasons. One must look his best in public so as not to give offense. to the eye or nose. The sick person is never washed since cold water would have the effect of driving the fever-heat inward to a fatal degree. The date for resumption of bathing for the convalescent is carefully considered; mistakes can result in relapse and death. Cool breezes must be avoided by the sick person for similar reasons. The house doors closed during the day invariably mean sickness within.

[754]

575
576
757

•754
776

The Buddhas are, of course, above earthly contacts and their helpers the THAMA DEWA (heavenly-nats) function only as judges in the after-world - although they may counsel the living, as a "conscience", on right living. The MEDA-DEWA (earth-nats) on the other hand are major forces of this world. There are 37 major nats each with a characteristic appearance (in human form) and personality. Each has an origin legend involving a story of a human of extraordinary characteristics who met death in an unusual fashion and remained on earth to complicate men's affairs. Most have properties of guardian spirits who if their needs are attended to will protect the interests of a community or special group mainly by refraining from doing harm.

[773]